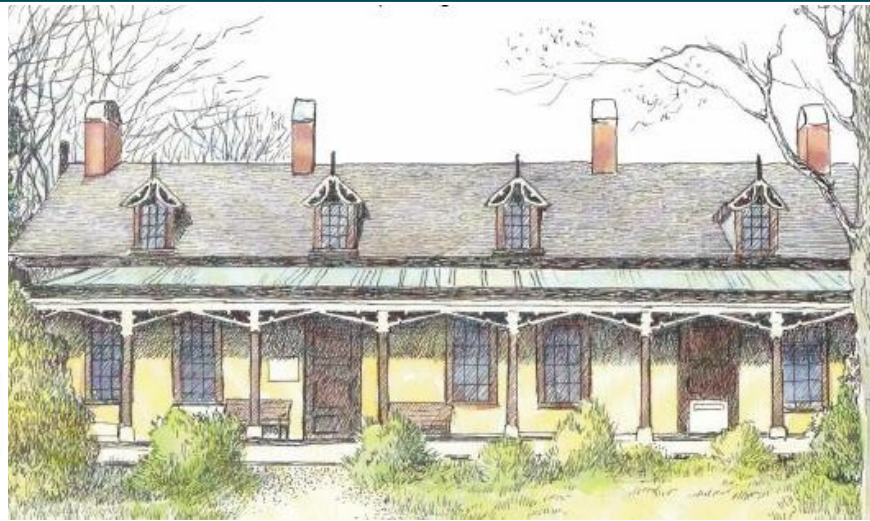


# The Homestead Chronicle

VOL. 7 NO. 3 A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE WAPPINGERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Summer 2021



Established 1967

P.O. Box 174  
Wappingers Falls  
NY 12590  
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## President's Message

Dear Friends,

Let's just start with the front of Mesier Homestead. How about those magnificent hanging baskets? Thanks to the Rotary Club, we are bedecked for the summer. And thanks to our Board volunteers and a group from Greystone Programs who come and water them every few days, they are thriving.

I think THRIVING is the perfect word for this Chronicle issue.

Our membership is thriving. We have welcomed lots of new members, and members with families. Having younger members with their youthful enthusiasm will ensure that we keep up with current trends and technology. This is how history lives on.

Our archive room is thriving. We have installed heat and air conditioning upstairs in the Homestead. The first thing an archivist asks us as we look for training and grants—"Is your place temperature controlled?" So, this is a huge step forward in the protection and preservation of all the archives and collections. We have a few volunteers every Tuesday and Wednesday who work on cataloguing. There is a lot to do so we welcome anyone who is interested in helping us in the research library. We had an intern this summer who was working on the Benjamin and Clinton Clapp family history. There are many opportunities for interns!!!

What is really thriving is the excitement that we all feel as we see the restoration of the original 1741-1742 section of the Mesier Homestead unfold. We started fundraising a few years ago through The Spirit of Mesier Cocktail Party. A HUGE thanks to members of the community who have made donations, especially Filly Baisley and Tom Byrnes. Most recently, through the efforts of Kathleen and David Cullen, a \$40,000 donation from the Margaret M. Rudel Fund was obtained. We can't thank our donors enough, because with these funds, (Continued on Page 2)

## Presidents Message—continued from page 1

we will be able to repair the crumbling foundations, sister the rotted beams, repair or replace rotted clapboard and restore all the windows and remove an antiquated heating system. So many people have wandered around back to watch the progress and are mesmerized at what it looks like with the siding removed. To see the insulation made from old bricks- called nogging. To see the huge beams with numbers carved into them to designate their place as the house was erected. To find out that what we thought was one section built by the Brower family might have been added on some 60-70 years later by the Mesiers- and how do we now know?? Because of the kind of nails they used. And the kind of mortar they used. Just Fascinating!! The next phase is the gutting of the inside of the old house. Removing all the crumbling plaster, opening the old fireplace with the beehive oven replacing the heating system, pulling up floorboards to get to the wide board floors, and insulating. Our goal is to bring this section back to its original colonial life.

JOIN US AND HELP US THRIVE!!

*Beth*

## Homestead Tours

At this time, we have re-opened for scheduled weekend tours of the Homestead. See our website for the latest on dates and details.

<https://www.wappingershistoricalsociety.org/mesier-homestead>

Like all other organizations, the state of the Covid-19 pandemic in our area could possibly require us to change our policies (maximum group size, mask requirements, etc), Please check our website or give us a ring at (845) 632-1281 for the latest information.



### Big Dan Brouthers Birthday

Happy 163rd Birthday, Dan!

Village of Wappingers Falls (NY) Mayor Richard Cerino (pictured left) and three members of the Wappingers Historical Society held a brief ceremony on Saturday, May 8, 2021, at St. Mary's Cemetery to honor native son and Baseball Hall of Fame great Dan Brouthers on the occasion of his 163rd Birthday.

Also attending the event from the Historical Society were (from left) Danielle Masterson (Trustee), Beth Devine (President), and Ken Cerino.



## ***Coming Events!***

### **Ice Cream Social**

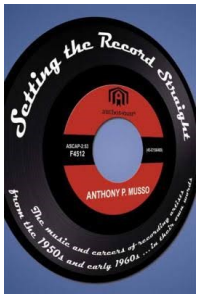
Tuesday, August 17, 2021. 6pm at Mesier Park in the Village

Bring a picnic dinner, lawn chairs or a blanket and listen to the beautiful music performed by Brian Lammers. You'll also receive a ticket courtesy of the Wappingers Historical Society for an Ice Cream Dessert from John DeMarco of "Chilly Willys" who will be on hand with his mobile ice cream truck.

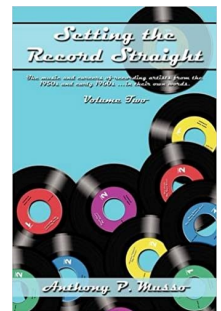


### **Speaker Series: Setting the Record Straight.**

Thursday, September 30, 2021. 7pm at Town of Wappinger Town Hall



Come and learn about the music and careers of recording artists from the 1950s and early 1960s...in their own words as told to author and historian Anthony Musso. The general public is invited. Members are free. Tickets are available at the door for \$5.00 for non-members.



### **Carriage and Sleigh Tour**

Saturday, October 9, 2021. 2 pm



Members of the Wappingers Historical Society are invited to visit Dick Lahey's home for a barn tour of this carriage and sleigh collection. There are approximately 25 carriages and sleighs, with many having been built or owned by Hudson Valley residents. Among the oldest carriages is one built in the 1860's in Hughsonville.

The barn tour will begin at 2:00pm and last approximately one hour. Many of the vehicles are on the second floor of the barn, accessible by a wide staircase with railing.

Tour details to come.

Photo: Dick Lahey, accompanied by Janice Hilderbrand (past President of the Wappingers Historical Society) driving his Morgan horse in a side-bar surrey made in Bangall, NY. Passengers are Mr. & Mrs. William Sedore.

## New Members

Welcome to our newest members who joined the Wappingers Historical Society since our last edition of the Homestead Chronicle

Susan Bennett

Donna Bolner & Family

Al & Toni Casella

Charlie Ferry & Family

Mary & Greg Hemingway

Roger and Patricia Higgins

Jerry & Mimi Husted

Steven Koch

Vicki Kolb

John and Annie Kozak

Dick Lahey

Kim and John Lawrence

Gary Lindstrom

Richard McHugh

Lisa Paoloni

Skip Rottkamp and Family

Lisa Sawall and Family

Orit Schwartz

John Shekitka

Joe Suriano-Schara and Family

### Business Memberships:

Polly Myhrum Pottery

Linda Catalina, CPA

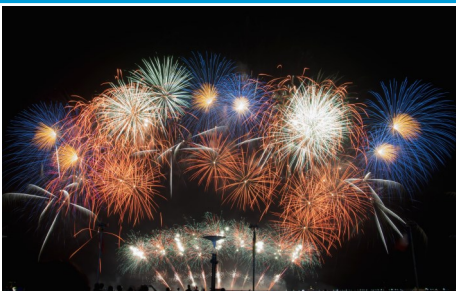
Music4Life, LLC

Law Offices of Heather Kitchen

Wappingers Falls Business and Professional Association

Many thanks as well for the continued support of *all* our members.

Your continued support is greatly appreciated!



Happy 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Village of Wappingers Falls!  
September 22, 2021



## The Children's Aid Society at Camp Bowdoin & Vanderbilt

For over 40 years in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Bowdoin Park was the site of Children's Aid Society camps to help city children. The Children's Aid Society of New York City was founded in 1853 by Charles Loring Brace to help the thousands of orphaned, abandoned and destitute children living on New York City's streets. It provided lodging houses and industrial schools, as well as placing children with families in the U.S. West (historically known as the Orphan Trains). As the society grew, so did their services, including state-wide adoptions, convalescent care, dental clinics, family counseling, foster care, Head Start, vocational counseling and summer camps. They had several offices in Manhattan, a Staten Island center, a convalescent home and handicapped children's camp in Chappaqua, and summer camps at Bowdoin in New Hamburg and Wallkill.

Camp Bowdoin and Vanderbilt in New Hamburg were established in 1928 on land donated to the Children's Aid Society by George Temple Bowdoin in memory of his parents. The summer camps served young boys and girls from New York City. Bowdoin Memorial Farm School was started by Frank Searles in 1933 on the grounds of Bowdoin Camp. It was modeled after the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps), a program begun by FDR. Each young man (16-21 years of age) received a certificate of achievement after six months training in Practical Farming. A certificate was awarded for completion of studies, which included general farming, gardening, care of horses, dairying, poultry and farm maintenance. The Farm School was notably visited by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933.

Camp Bowdoin (boys) and Camp Vanderbilt (girls) ran three, three-week camp sessions. Children from all over the five boroughs of New York City were selected by the society to attend. The boy's camps were Netherwood, Pioneer, Overlook and Indian Village. A copy of the boy's schedule in 1948 is as follows:

- 6:30 Reveille
- 7:30 Breakfast
- 8:30 Clean-up/sick call
- 9:30 Inspection and flag raising
- 9:45 Sports activity
- 11:00 General Swim
- 12:30 Lunch
- 1:30 Rest
- 2:30 Arts & crafts, nature, dramatics,  
archery, camp site clearing
- 4:30 General swim
- 6:00 Supper
- 7:00 Canteen & sick call
- 8:00 Evening activity- movie, stunt  
night, campfire etc.



Magnificent views of the Hudson River could be seen from the cabins

The girls' cabin sites were named Vanderbilt, Grinnell, Hilltop and Oakhurst. The schedule at Vanderbilt camp was similar to the boys', and included showers every other day, arts and crafts and athletics in the morning. Swimming, letter writing to home, and choir and drama practice filled their afternoons. The Children's Aid Society continued running the camps in New Hamburg until the early 1970's.

You can still see remnants of the camp's cabins if you take the short hiking trail in Bowdoin Park. Dutchess County purchased the land in 1975 and created a county park, known today as Bowdoin Park. Volunteer efforts and donations through the Bowdoin Park Historical & Archeological Association enabled the construction of nature trails, camping sites, a playground, picnic area and renovation of the playing fields.

*Information and photos contained within this article are derived from the Bea Buchanan collection in the WHS archives.*



## The Children's Aid Society at Camp Bowdoin & Vanderbilt (Continued)

### HURRICANE OF 1938

(Excerpt from a 1985 letter by Chris Gaule, age about 16 at the time of the storm and a student at the Bowdoin Farm School, of the Children's Aid Society)

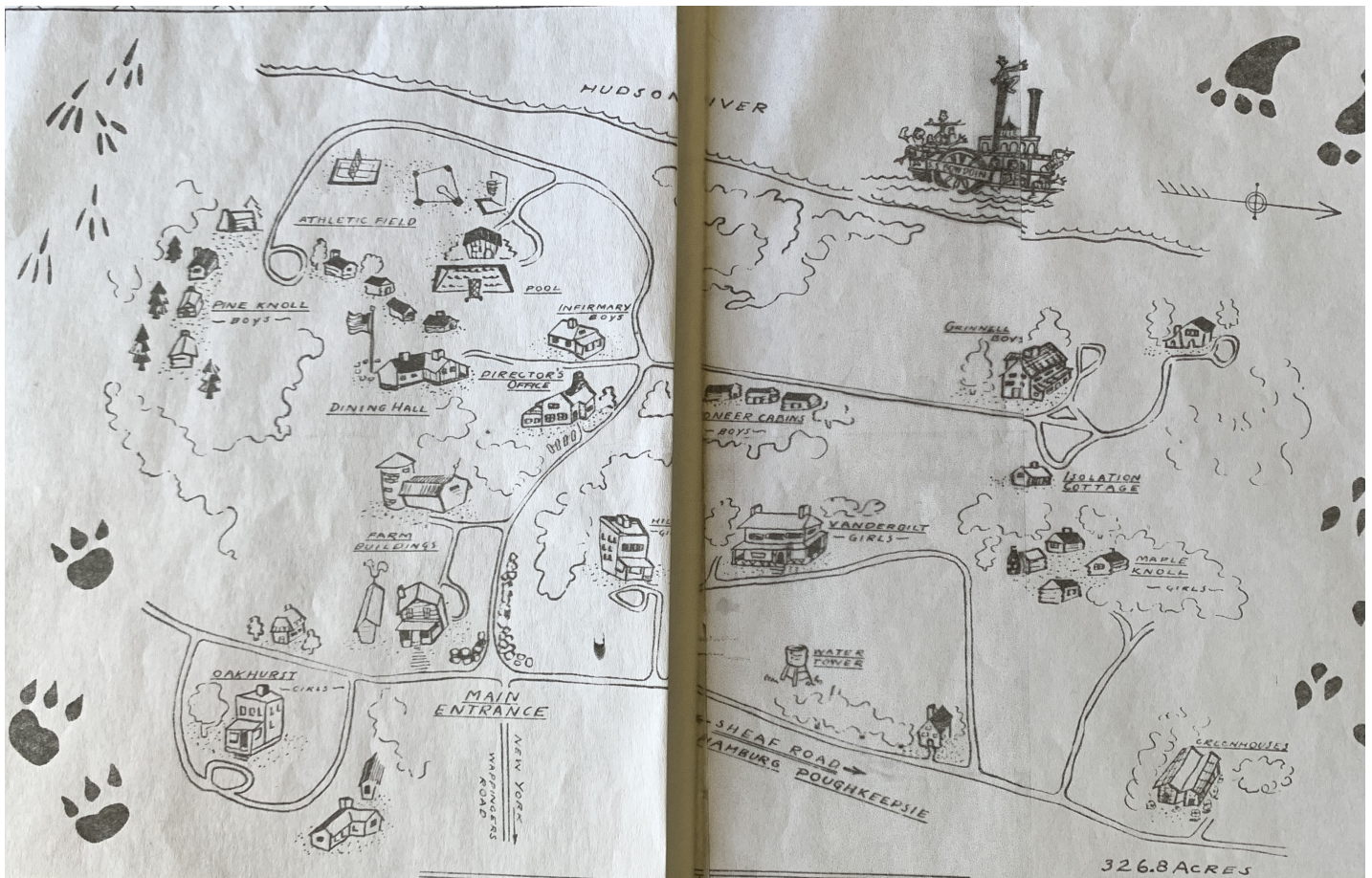
In 1938 Sept, an entourage of 6 cars went to the Springfield, Mass. Fair. While there a hurricane came and we were advised to leave (30 of us, approximately, from Bowdoin Farm School) - as we left, the Fair was in tents then, they began to blow down, as we left and looked back.

As we travelled along the road, we witnessed trees blowing down, streams becoming torrents of water, rivers, waterfalls, and houses being swept down river. We slept in cars overnight; my window wouldn't close all the way, I stuffed clothes and towels in it to stay dry - Next morning when sun came out, it rolled up. We then observed that road under us was being eroded by water, streaming past. We got out of there quickly - it might have collapsed, travelling down this road (I figured near Pittsfield, Mass.) before us was a stream torrent going down road - Dan Dylan, our leader, got out and asked a native, was there a road ahead, He replied, "Yup yesterday there was." So on we went, water coming in through bottom of doors. We arrived back at Bowdoin 1 1/2 days later on a trip that should have taken about 3-4 hrs.

A survey of Bowdoin: An estimate of 600 to 900 trees blown down. It was fall, so we went to work cutting and splitting logs to 4 foot lengths, to be used as firewood for 3 greenhouses and fireplaces in "Hilltop" and living quarters in other cabins. Pra Beckstead was leader of my unit in the project. He let me chop out own pile of firewood, my pile was at second gate in left hand side going north. I forget the number of cords, but it was high, and wider than the entrance in to the side. I was in great shape then - thought you'd like a little History of Hurricane Event, September 1938.

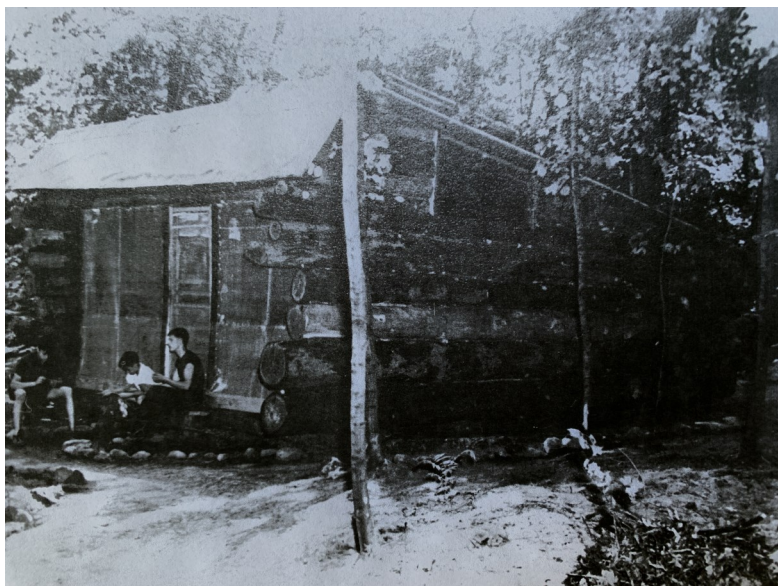


## The Children's Aid Society at Camp Bowdoin & Vanderbilt (Continued)





## The Children's Aid Society at Camp Bowdoin & Vanderbilt (Continued)





Our annual member picnic was held on July 20. The crowd enjoyed a “Hotdog Hoedown” and potluck, as well as an ice cream treat donated by Paul DeMarco of Chilly Willys. It was great to see everyone in person again!





***Thank you* to these businesses for their support of our annual member picnic!**

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## Mesier Homestead Restoration Update

The restoration work to the original c1742 portion of the Mesier Homestead has continued at full throttle this summer. The transformation has been tremendous. The repair and restoration work to the foundation, exterior wall studs, clapboards, door, and windows is all in process. In spite of discovering more work than we had originally imagined, we are on track to have the exterior fully complete and ready for winter. As indicated in Beth's President's letter of this edition, we continue to learn many new things about this portion of the Homestead. It is truly fascinating to be a part of the unraveling of the past of this historic structure.





## Mesier Homestead Restoration Update



Note the mortise and tenon construction: Look ma—no nails! Next to the angled joint, you can see the two Roman Numeral “II” scribed into the wood to note that these two pieces were identified to be put together during the original construction. Also note a couple of old nails—by the style and look of the nails, Andrew was able to tell the timeframe in which they were likely used. Most all the stud positions are numbered as well. These numbers have provided clues as to where each of the two additions that were made to this part of the house were situated.



When we opened up this wall, we discovered a late 1700’s style window lurking under the wallboard!



Above; The wide “modern” boards and hydraulic jacks were temporarily installed to hold up the wall and floor while Andrew DuPont of Silverhammer Restorations rebuilt the foundation, replaced the sill plate and other restorative parts.



Left: The firebox of this fireplace was opened—we had no idea that this “Keystone” design existed.



## Archeological Adventures!

As a part of the restoration activities, grading was required around the foundation to allow a proper amount of space between the clapboards and the ground. The “extra” dirt from the grading is being screened to see what treasures it may hold. As you can see from the pictures, we found a lot of kitchen pottery shards. It is extremely rewarding to find these pieces to learn what we can from these artifacts that have been hidden for upwards to 280 years! There is still plenty more screening work to do, so let us know if you are interested in volunteering to help us dig and sweat as our archeological adventure continues..

